

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ADDIS 00967 271120Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 261543Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7890

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 0967

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR ET IS EG XA XF

SUBJECT: PRESENCE OF ISRAELIS IN ETHIOPIA ALLEGED

REF: ADDIS 1750 AND PREVIOUS (NOTAL)

1. EGYPTIAN AMB BASSIOUNY TOLD POL COUNSELOR AFTERNOON JAN 25 THAT HIS EMBASSY HAD CONFIRMED TO HIS SATISFACTION THE PRESENCE OF 33 ISRAELIS AT DEBRE ZEIT.
2. AMB BASSIOUNY SAID THAT HE HAD NOT REPEAT NOT YET INFORMED CAIRO OF THESE FINDINGS BUT STATED THAT HE HAD APPROACHED THE EPMG'S MOFA "TO REQUEST AN EXPLANATION."
3. MOFA (INTERLOCUTOR UNSPECIFIED) HAD TOLD HIM, BASSIOUNY SAID, THAT IT WAS IN NO RPT NO POSITION TO ANSWER EGYPTIAN QUESTION LET ALONE PROVIDE EXPLANATION. BASSIOUNY TOLD POL COUNSELOR THAT HE HAD TOLD MOFA TO INFORM ITSELF SO THAT IT MIGHT RESPOND TO HIS (BASSIOUNY'S) REQUEST.
4. BASSIOUNY SAID THAT THIS WAS MOST UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENT--ONE LIKELY TO WEIGH ON HIS GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS ETHIOPIA.
5. BASSIOUNY PROBED POL COUNSELOR TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER

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THERE HAD BEEN ANY NOTIFICATION OR CONSULTATION BY THE

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ON THE RETURN OF ISRAELI PERSONNEL TO ETHIOPIA. POL COUNSELOR TOLD BASSIOUNY THAT THIS EMBASSY HAD NO CONFIRMATION OF ISRAELI PRESENCE AND WAS UNAWARE ANY SUCH CONTACT OR CONSULTATION.

6. MUSING OUT LOUD, BASSIOUNY OPINED THAT WORD OF THIS ISRAELI PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA LIKELY SURFACE SOON PUBLICLY, FOR EXAMPLE ON RADIO MOGADISCIO.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH, AS DEPT AWARE (REFTEL), WE HAD ALSO HEARD OF ARRIVAL ISRAELI PERSONNEL, WE HAVE AS YET BEEN UNABLE INDEPENDENTLY TO CONFIRM IT. WE HAVE REPORTED INFORMATION REACHING US ON DIRG'S EFFORTS FEEL OUT ISRAELIS, AND REPORTED ARRIVAL OF ISRAELI PERSONNEL CERTAINLY FITS IN WITH THESE PRELIMINARIES. HOWEVER, IT DOES NOT RPT NOT APPEAR TO FIT WITH STRONGLY PRO-ARAB POSTURE ETHIOPIA HAS TAKEN DURING RECENT MONTHS OR WITH EPMG'S PRESUMED INTEREST IN NOT REPEAT NOT ANTAGONIZING ARAB WORLD GIVEN ITS NEEDS FOR ARAB SUPPORT ON ERITREA AS WELL AS IN ETHIOPIA'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOMALIA, SUDAN NOT TO SPEAK OF QUESTIONS LIKELY TO ARISE AS STATUS TFAI EVOLVES.

8. BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE DO KNOW THAT DIRG IS MORE THAN EVER PREOCCUPIED BY ITS MANIFOLD INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEMS. AT PRESENT IT IS APPARENTLY SUSPECTING "THE ARABS" OF HELPING ITS MANY OPPONENTS NOT MERELY WITH ARMS AND MONEY BUT WITH THE COORDINATION OF THEIR EFFORTS--IN ERITREA, TIGRE AND BEGEMDIR AS WELL AS IN BALE AND HARARGUE. RECOURSE TO ISRAELIS, WHATEVER THE CONSEQUENCES, COULD BE THE RESULT. IF SO, MOFA MAY NOT HAVE BEEN CONSULTED OR, IF CONSULTED, WAS --ONCE AGAIN-- OVERRULED BY DIRG.

9. KEY POINT FOR US HERE IS APPARENT EGYPTIAN BELIEF THAT ISRAELIS ARE IN FACT BACK AND BASSIOUNY'S QUERY WHETHER WE HAVE KNOWN OR BEEN CONSULTED ABOUT IT. IF DEPT DEEMS APPROPRIATE, IT MAY WISH ASK EMBASSY CAIRO TO REPEAT OUR DENIAL OF FOREKNOWLEDGE IF QUERIED BY EGYPTIANS.
TIENKEN

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